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**STATEMENT BY MR. ALEXANDER LUKASHEVICH,
PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION,
AT THE 1104th MEETING OF THE
OSCE PERMANENT COUNCIL**

9 June 2016

**In response to the address by the
Secretary General of the Council of Europe, Mr. Thorbjørn Jagland**

Mr. Chairperson,
Secretary General,

We are pleased to welcome you to Vienna and listened to your statement with great interest. Together with the priorities of the Estonian Chairmanship of the Council of Europe Committee of Ministers outlined here recently by Ms. Marina Kaljurand, your assessment gives a comprehensive picture of the basic thrusts of the Council of Europe's work.

We appreciate your efforts to strengthen the Council of Europe's role as an independent organization in which the interests of all member States are given equal consideration. We support the focus on depoliticized work without a selective approach aimed at developing intercultural dialogue and preserving Europe's cultural identity. We regard the safeguarding of the leading position of the Council of Europe in creating a unified legal and humanitarian space on the continent as a most important orientation. This also involves fostering co-operation in social, cultural, educational, sporting and other fields. Otherwise it will be impossible to accomplish the broader task of creating a community free of dividing lines, conflicts, spheres of influence and zones with different levels of security.

The values underlying the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms are as relevant as ever. Without this support, Europe risks having to deal with the continued rise of nationalism, racism and the intolerance they entail, which are all the more dangerous in the context of the migration crisis in Europe. The Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights Mr. Nils Muižnieks mentioned this very topic in his report on the work of the first quarter of this year. Due attention needs to be paid without a doubt to the problems of migrants and asylum seekers. This follows directly from the logic of the Convention, which calls for observance of the rights of every individual and not just those of the ethnic majority in a given State.

However, the same logic demands that the Council of Europe pay greater attention to a number of chronic problems, including protection of national minorities and their language

rights, elimination of the disgraceful phenomenon of mass statelessness, and combating aggressive nationalism and the persistent attempts to falsify history. We are seeing a dangerous trend towards the glorification of Nazis and their followers, the desecration of monuments to those who died fighting Nazism, and the persecution of veterans who fought on the side of the anti-Hitler coalition. They are a direct threat to peace and tranquillity in Europe. It is impossible to ignore the intolerable situation in this regard in Ukraine, Lithuania, Latvia and Estonia. We are also counting on the Council of Europe to continue to demand from the Ukrainian Government the prosecution of those involved in the mass burning alive of people in Odessa in May 2014.

We hope, distinguished Secretary General, that your attention will focus on these questions. Their rapid solution will facilitate the building of a really united and forward-looking Europe.

Secretary General,

As you know, in May 2005 the OSCE and the Council of Europe defined four priority areas for co-operation: the fight against terrorism, combating trafficking in human beings, promoting tolerance and non-discrimination, and protection of the rights of persons belonging to national minorities. It is important that these two pan-European organizations closely co-ordinate their activities and avoid duplication and the dissipation of resources.

In spring this year Russia celebrated an important date, the 20th anniversary of its membership of the Council of Europe. We remain committed to the slogan of the Russian Chairmanship of the Committee of Ministers in 2006: "Towards a united Europe without dividing lines". We are positive that the joint efforts of the OSCE and the Council of Europe will make a real contribution to the creation of a unified economic and humanitarian space on the continent.

We wish you, Secretary General, success in your multifaceted work in the interests of the security and stability of Europe.

Thank you for your attention.